



BELIDEUS FLAVIVENTER.

Long-tailed Belideus.

Petaurista flaviventer, Desm. Mamm., p. 269.

Didelphis Petaurus, Shaw, Gen. Zool., vol. i. p. 496.

Petaurus (Belideus) flaviventer, Waterh. Nat. Lib. Mamm., vol. ix. (Marsupialia), p. 286.

——— *australis*, Shaw, Nat. Misc., vol. ii. pl. 60.—List of Mamm. in Brit. Mus. Coll., p. 83.

Didelphys volucella, Meyer, p. 26.

Petaurus Cunninghami, Gray, MSS. B.M.

Sciurus Novæ-Hollandiæ, Meyer.

Didelphys macroura, Shaw, Zool. of New Holl., p. 33. pl. xii. young.—Ib. Gen. Zool., vol. i. p. 500. pl. 113. young.

Petaurus macrourus, Waterh. Nat. Lib. Mamm., vol. ix. (Marsupialia), p. 288. young.

MR. WATERHOUSE, who has paid considerable attention to the Marsupialia, in speaking of this animal, says, “The Hcpoona Roo of White’s Journal, the original also of Shaw’s *Didelphis Petaurus*, is still in existence in the Museum of the College of Surgeons; it proves to be the present species, and not the *P. Taguanoides*, as has always been supposed. This ought therefore to be regarded as the type of Shaw’s genus *Petaurus*, if authors are right in attributing that genus to Shaw; but I do not perceive that he ever regarded the animal in question as constituting a genus, or that he applied the name in a generic sense.”

This fine species is common in all the brushies of New South Wales, particularly those which stretch along the coast from Port Philip to Moreton Bay. In these vast forests, trees of one kind or another are perpetually flowering, and thus offer a never-failing supply of blossoms upon which the Long-tailed Belideus feeds; the flowers of the various kinds of gums, some of which are of great magnitude, are the principal favourites. Like the rest of the genus it is nocturnal in its habits, dwelling in holes and in the spouts of the larger branches during the day, and displaying the greatest activity at night while running over the small leafy branches, frequently even to their very extremities, in search of insects and the honey of the newly-opened blossoms. Its structure being ill adapted for terrestrial habits it seldom descends to the ground, except for the purpose of passing to a tree too distant to be attained by springing from the one it wishes to leave. The tops of the trees are traversed by this animal with as much ease as the most level ground is by such as are destined for terra firma. If chased or forced to flight, it ascends to the highest branch, and performs the most enormous leaps, sweeping from tree to tree with wonderful address; a slight elevation gives its body an impetus, which with the expansion of its membrane enables it to pass to a considerable distance, always ascending a little at the extremity of the leap; by this ascent the animal is prevented from receiving the shock which it would otherwise sustain.

It is now very generally believed that the *Petaurus macrourus* is only the young of *Petaurus flaviventer*; I have therefore placed the former name as a synonym.

General colour either greyish or yellowish brown; head clouded with black, particularly round the eyes, at the base of the ear, on the muzzle and chin; a black mark extends from the occiput along the middle of the back; the fore and hind legs and the side membrane blackish brown; edge of the membrane and under surface of the body buff; basal half of the tail yellowish brown, the remainder black.

The sexes are alike in colour.

The accompanying Plate represents the animal a trifle less than the natural size.